



SERVICE QUALITY

Engineering and Management Services Department

The Engineering and Management Services Department's (EMSD, Staff or Department) mission is to develop, enhance and support utility management to provide quality services to customers and effective cost control of critical resources such as capital, technology and human resources. The Engineering Staff of EMSD conducts depreciation studies and provides specialized engineering analysis and assistance for all types of regulated utilities.

Major Projects During 2002

The EMSD staff participated in a variety of cases and audits during the year. Specifically, Staff initiated and completed a customer service and gas supply review of Atmos Energy Corporation. Atmos serves approximately 65,000 Missouri customers. The EMSD department traveled to company headquarters in Dallas, Texas and other locations to review the company's call center and credit and collection activities, meter reading, disconnect and reconnect activities, gas procurement processes and others. Staff's report resulted in 27 recommendations made to company management for improvement. Subsequent to receiving Staff's report, the company submitted its implementation plan.

The EMSD Staff participated on a multi-disciplined team to review electric company responses to the severe ice storm that occurred in Missouri during January 2002. Staff met with city employees and utility operational and management employees from KCPL, Aquila and AmerenUE to review each company's response to the ice storm including company policies and procedures. A report was developed that included recommenda-

tions to company management that addressed a range of areas including workforce configuration, communication and call center performance.

During this fiscal year, the Staff also performed follow-up activities in a review of Aquila's gas procurement processes as well as participated in the company's rate case regarding the company's call center performance. The EMSD Staff also participated in a PSC Staff earnings complaint case against AmerenUE, performing analysis and filing testimony regarding the company's quality of service.

EMSD Staff continued to receive and review status reports from a variety of companies as a result of merger cases.

These reports contain information regarding customer service at the companies including data on call center indicators such as average speed of answer (ASA) and abandoned call rate (ACR). Information on distribution reliability at specific electric companies is also received.



Depreciation Engineers Rosella Schad and Jolie Mathis prepare for a hearing with Deputy General Counsel Tim Schwarz.

EMSD Staff continued graphing and analyzing company complaint data received from the PSC Consumer Services Department. This data is maintained to track performance trends in the areas of consumer complaints to the Commission.

The department participated in PSC Staff reviews of several small water and sewer companies to assist them in providing sound customer service. The audit program is designed to assist such companies in a variety of areas including customer billing, credit and collections, complaint handling and others.

During fiscal 2002, Engineering Staff compiled depreciation studies and reports on seven water companies, six sewer companies, three telephone companies, four electric companies and one gas company. Five of these depreciation studies were major rate or PSC staff complaint cases. In these

five large cases, engineers developed proposals that would allow for an approximate \$130 million reduction in the positions requested by utilities. Depreciation comprises a significant component of the cost used to develop utility rates paid by consumers.

Depreciation engineers made company visits and participated in plant tours to further develop their knowledge and understanding of each company's tangible plant. This knowledge, coupled with statistical analysis of plant mortality data, serves as the basis of the PSC Staff's work in each rate case. These "depreciation studies" are the support for Staff's depreciation rates in each case.

The engineering staff also organized a two-day technical telecommunications training seminar. By bringing in telecommunications experts, the industry, the PSC Staff, rural economic development directors, legislators and educational institutions, the PSC provided a forum where information could be shared on present, as well as future technology. The cross-section of attendees, from community officials to educators, was indicative of the impact that telecommunications technology makes on Missourians. The first live interactive broadcast of a Missouri PSC event brought the seminar to multiple points across the state.

Consumer Services

The Consumer Services Department serves as the central repository for consumer complaints and inquiries received by the Commission.

Consumer complaints may be filed with the Commission by mail, facsimile, e-mail or the Commission's consumer toll-free hotline. Complaints may also be submitted on-line through the Commission's website. Consumer Services Specialists receive, investigate and respond to billing and service issues involving gas, electric, water, sewer, and telecommunications companies regulated by the Commission. The investigation of complaints may involve consulting with the Commission's technical Staff, utility representatives and researching utility tariffs and Commission rules and regulations. Through the handling of consumer complaints, Specialists work to enforce



Consumer Services Department Manager Janet Hoerschgen answers utility questions on the department's toll-free hotline.

Commission rules and utility tariffs.

Specialists also interact with other PSC Staff regarding consumer service issues in proposed rulemakings on the state and federal level. This interaction also involves participating in customer service focused reviews of utility operations and participating in formal cases before the Commission regarding issues that impact customer services.

Consumer Service specialists also interact with social service agencies by referring consumers to other agencies that may provide the needed assistance. During the past year, Specialists participated in the Emergency Amendment to the Cold Weather Rule, as well as several variance and formal complaint cases before the Commission.

In mid April 2002, the Commission converted from the mainframe complaint/inquiry system to the Consumer Quality portion of the Electronic Filing and Information System (EFIS). This electronic system replaced the mainframe complaint/inquiry system that Specialists had used since the 1970s. This has enhanced the PSC Staff's capabilities to communicate electronically, attach files, measure handling times and receive, record and track both public comments and outage reports which may be submitted electronically. Future enhancements will include the activation of a consumer survey to enable the PSC to measure the level of satisfaction consumers experience in contacting Commission offices.